



GARDEN VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

August 20, 2008

El Dorado County Superior Court
Honorable Judge James R. Wagoner
495 Main Street
Placerville, CA. 95667

Grand Jury Case No. 07-025

Dear Judge Wagoner,

The Garden Valley Fire Protection District has spent many hours evaluating the report submitted for consolidation of the fire districts in El Dorado County. The report shows a lack of investigation, by not interviewing all 10 of the fire districts involved. The only district interviewed that would face the loss of funding was Mosquito Fire Protection District. Nor was the potential increase in the cost of personnel and benefits considered when the larger departments take-in the smaller districts.

The larger districts pay their personnel at higher salary rates and benefit scales than most of the smaller districts. This along with the projected loss of funding from the county would leave our district with a deficit of over \$400,000.00 dollars a year after consolidation. This of course is projected at the current level of service the GVFPD provides the public both in and out of district boundaries. If the county decided to follow the recommendations of the Grand Jury and remove it's funding to the districts, it becomes questionable if the level of service now provided by these districts would remain at its present level. The savings to the county of 14 to 19 million dollars over the next ten years sounds great, but when you look at the intensity of the fires taking place in our area, in the last few years, the largest loss in the country being the Tahoe fire last year, it doesn't make much sense to be looking at decreased spending for fire suppression in El Dorado County.

All of the districts work together in this county to produce fire suppression planning to benefit everyone, not just our local districts. Dispatching of district fire apparatus is not done by district boundaries, but by the nearest equipment to the scene. Also, in talking with the larger districts, we found them hesitant to commit to the idea of picking up the added cost of consolidation. Nor did we find the larger districts willing to reorganize district boundaries to allow other districts a way to consolidate.

We did investigate the possible consolidation of the GVFPD with many other districts including County Fire and Cal Fire schedule "A", which is not consolidation but was another possibility. As mentioned above, the cost increases put a dim light on the idea. Please see the attached reports from County Fire and Cal Fire. The County Fire report shows a wage cost increase of \$ 102,350.00, and the Cal Fire report shows a cost increase of \$ 209,839.38.



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In closing, we find the report lacking the insight necessary to make the kind of judgment call the Grand Jury is recommending from the board of supervisors. We feel any reduction in funding to any district in El Dorado County would have a negative in-pack. This would cause reductions in fire service personnel and equipment response times, thus requiring a greater reliance on volunteers for district coverage. With the state increasing requirements for training and certification of volunteer personnel, it is much harder to find community members willing to give the time required to become a volunteer. We find the need to continue funding to all the districts a priority and any change, based on this report, would pose a risk to the people of El Dorado County.

Respectfully,

Robert Rogers, Board Chair
Garden Valley Fire Protection District